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Lieb

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(54) **DRINKING STRAW PACKAGING SYSTEM AND METHOD**

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Related U.S. Application Data

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(51) **Int. Cl.**

B65D 85/20	(2006.01)
B65D 75/02	(2006.01)
B65D 75/38	(2006.01)
B65D 85/08	(2006.01)

(52) **U.S. Cl.**

CPC ***B65D 75/02*** (2013.01); ***B65D 75/38*** (2013.01); *B65D 85/08* (2013.01); *Y10T 29/49826* (2015.01)

(58) **Field of Classification Search**

CPC B65D 75/02; B65D 75/38; B65D 85/08
USPC 206/217, 443, 459.5, 497, 525, 446; 220/703, 705, 707–710; 229/103.1
See application file for complete search history.

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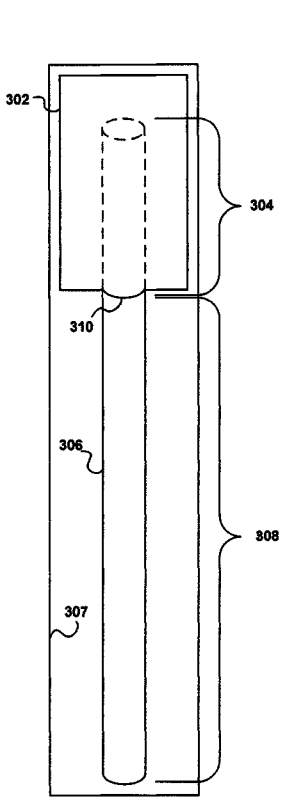
Primary Examiner — Luan K Bui

(57) **ABSTRACT**

A method of packaging a drinking straw includes a cover configured to attach to and to enclose a first portion of the drinking straw. A second portion of the drinking straw may be inserted into a beverage by a waiter handling the cover attached to the drinking straw.

11 Claims, 4 Drawing Sheets



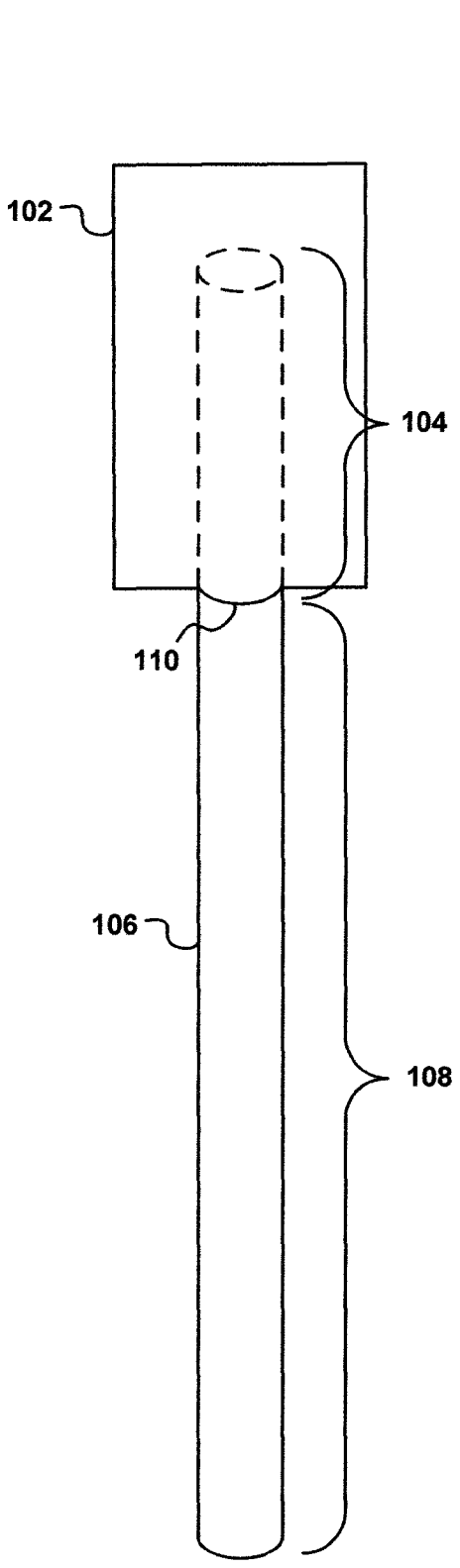


FIG. 1

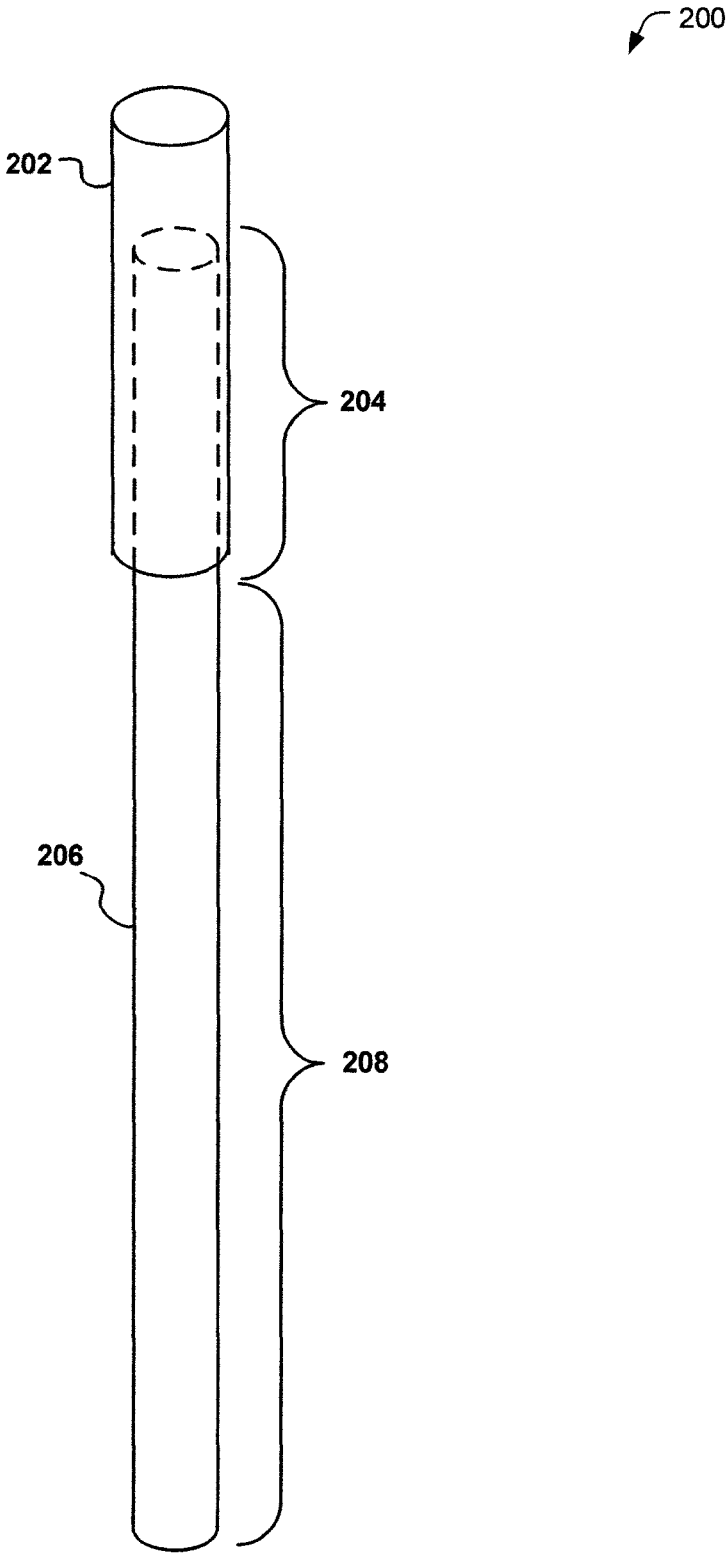


FIG. 2

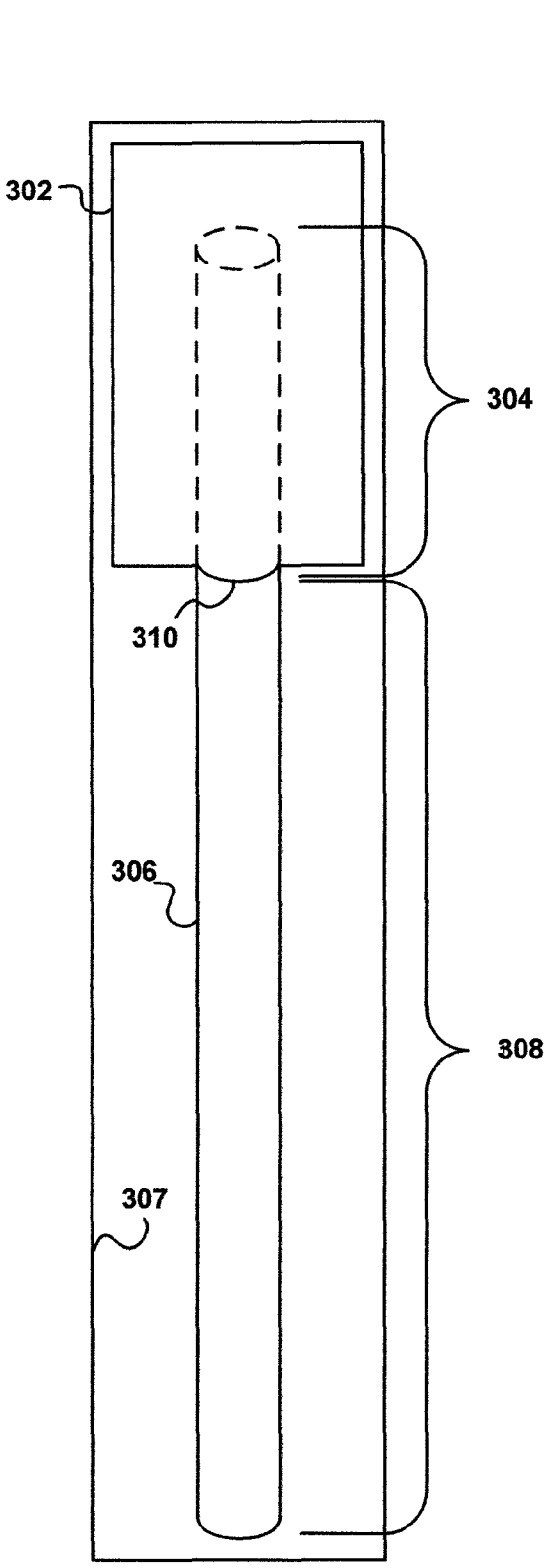


FIG. 3

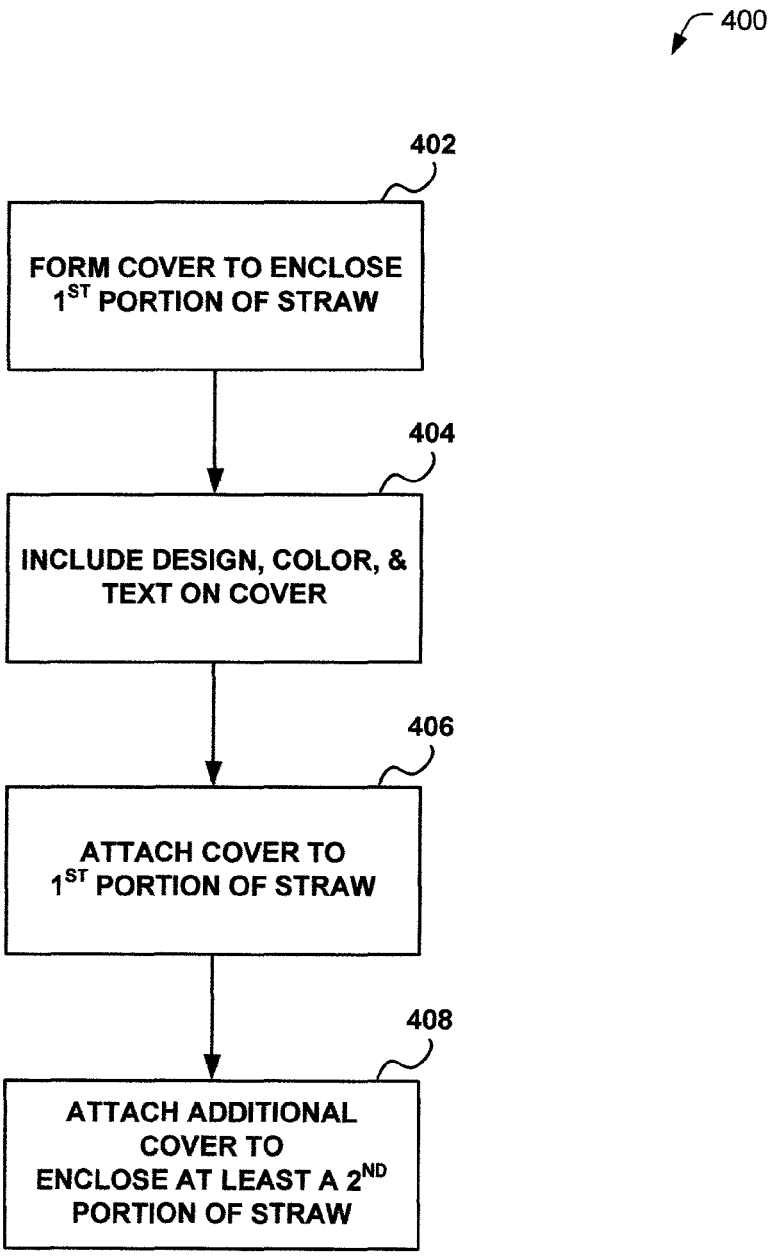

400
402
FORM COVER TO ENCLOSE 1ST PORTION OF STRAW
404
INCLUDE DESIGN, COLOR, & TEXT ON COVER
406
ATTACH COVER TO 1ST PORTION OF STRAW
408
ATTACH ADDITIONAL COVER TO ENCLOSE AT LEAST A 2ND PORTION OF STRAW

FIG. 4

DRINKING STRAW PACKAGING SYSTEM AND METHOD

I. CLAIM OF PRIORITY

This application claims priority to U.S. Provisional Patent Application No. 61/476,328, filed on Apr. 18, 2011, which is incorporated by reference herein in its entirety for all purposes.

II. FIELD OF THE DISCLOSURE

The present disclosure relates generally to drinking straws, and more specifically, to the packaging of drinking straws.

III. BACKGROUND

A drinking straw is a tube used to transfer a beverage from a container into the mouth of the drinker by use of suction. The tube is generally thin and constructed from plastic. The drinking straw may be straight or may include an accordion-like hinge. Drinking straws are typically packaged by enclosing them completely within paper wrappers for sanitary considerations. A wrapper is sealed along the seams of its ends and lengths. Packaged drinking straws are typically provided alongside the beverage. A restaurant patron tears the paper wrapper to access the straw for insertion into the beverage.

IV. SUMMARY OF THE DISCLOSURE

A method of packaging a drinking straw includes a cover configured to attach to and to enclose a first portion of the drinking straw. A second, uncovered portion of the drinking straw may be inserted into a beverage by a waiter handling the cover attached to the drinking straw. As such, food service providers may provide drinks that already have straws placed into the beverages (e.g., without requiring patrons to so). An embodiment of a partial wrap straw system thus provides straws efficiently and in a sanitary manner. Service professionals may place straws in cups using the cover in a manner that does not contaminate the drinking straw or the beverage.

Drinking straws may be partially wrapped in a food safe material on the drinking end of the straw. The wrappers, or covers, may be available in a variety of colors to label drinks contents. Embodiments of the drinking straw covers may thus take on additional functions by indicating a type of beverage. For instance, the color or symbol printed on the cover may be used to designate a diet drink. Another embodiment of a cover may include a message for a consumer or a company logo.

In a particular embodiment, an apparatus includes a drinking straw and a cover configured to be attached to a first portion of the drinking straw. The cover may at least partially enclose the first portion of the drinking straw and may not enclose a second portion of the drinking straw. As such, the cover at least partially seals an outer surface of the first portion of the drinking straw from ambient air and contaminants.

The cover may be constructed from at least one of paper, metal, and plastic, and may include an anti-bacterial material. A logo or other design may be printed on the cover. The cover may be attached to the first portion of the drinking straw using at least one of an adhesive, a heat sealing treatment, a fastener, and a vacuum sealing treatment. A particular embodiment may include an additional cover configured to be attached to at least one of the cover and the drinking straw. The additional cover may at least partially enclose a second portion of the drinking straw and/or the cover.

According to another particular embodiment, a method includes packaging a drinking straw such that a cover at least partially encloses a first portion of the drinking straw. A cover may be formed that is configured to at least partially enclose a first portion of a drinking straw. The cover may be constructed using one or more of paper, metal, rubber, ceramic, anti-bacterial material, and plastic. The cover may be attached to the first portion of the drinking straw. For instance, the cover may be attached using at least one of an adhesive, a heat sealing treatment, a fastener, and a vacuum sealing treatment. The cover may be attached to the first portion such that the cover does not enclose a second portion of the drinking straw.

At least one of a color, logo, or other design may be printed on the cover. The printed material may pertain to the contents of the beverage or may include advertising material, for example. An additional cover may be attached to at least one of the cover and the drinking straw. The additional cover may at least partially enclose a second portion of the drinking straw. Where so configured, the additional cover may be torn from the cover. According to a particular embodiment, the additional cover may also enclose at least a portion of the cover. Where so desired, at least one of the first and second covers may be attached to a cover of another drinking straw.

These and other advantages and features that characterize the embodiments are set forth in the claims annexed hereto and forming a further part hereof. However, for a better understanding of the embodiments, and of the advantages and objectives attained through its use, reference should be made to the drawings and to the accompanying descriptive matter in which there are described exemplary embodiments.

V. BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

FIG. **1** is a diagram of an embodiment of a drinking straw system that partially encloses and seals a portion of a drinking straw;

FIG. **2** is a diagram of an embodiment of a drinking straw system having a cap cover that encloses a first portion of drinking straw;

FIG. **3** is a diagram of an embodiment of a drinking straw system having a first cover that encloses a first portion of drinking straw and a second cover that encloses the first cover and a second portion of the drinking straw; and

FIG. **4** is a flowchart illustrating an embodiment of a method of packaging a drinking straw such that a cover at least partially encloses a first portion of the drinking straw.

VI. DETAILED DESCRIPTION

An embodiment of a drinking straw packaging system includes a cover configured to attach to and to enclose a first portion of the drinking straw. A second portion of the drinking straw may be inserted into a beverage by a waiter handling the cover attached to the drinking straw.

Turning more particularly to the drawings, the embodiment of the drinking straw packaging system **100** of FIG. **1** includes a cover **102** that at least partially encloses a first portion **104** of a drinking straw **106**. A second portion **108** of the drinking straw **106** may not be enclosed by the cover **102**. As such, the second portion **108** of the drinking straw **106** may be inserted into a beverage by a waiter handling the cover **102**, which is attached to the drinking straw **106**.

An embodiment of the cover **102** may be attached to the first portion **104** of the drinking straw **106** using an adhesive or a fastener. Another embodiment may use a heat sealing technique or a vacuum sealing technique. For example, the

cover **102** may be attached and sealed at a first end **110** of the cover **102**. The cover **102** may additionally or alternatively contact all or an additional portion of an outside surface of the drinking straw **106**.

The cover **102** may be removably attached to the first portion **104** such that a user may pull or tear the cover **102** from the drinking straw **106**. The cover **102** may additionally be removably attached to a second cover of a second drinking straw (e.g., shown in FIG. **3**) such that the drinking straws can be shipped together and separated at the time of use.

The cover **102** may include a color, logo, or other printed message. The printed message may indicate type of beverage (e.g., diet or regular). Another printed message may comprise an advertisement.

The cover **102** may be constructed of plastic, paper, ceramic, rubber, or metal. The cover **102** may be sterilized and may include an anti-bacterial surface coating. The cover **102** at least partially seals an outer surface of the first portion **104** of the drinking straw **106** from ambient air and potential contaminants.

FIG. **2** is a diagram of an embodiment of a drinking straw system **200** having a cover **202** that comprises a cap structure that encloses a first portion **204** of a drinking straw **206**. The cover **202** may be removably attached to the first portion **204** such that a user may pull the cover **202** from the drinking straw **206**. The cover **202** may additionally be removably attached to a second cover of a second drinking straw (not shown) such that the drinking straws are held together when shipped and stored, and may be separated when used. The cover **202** may be constructed of plastic, paper, ceramic, or metal. The cover **202** may be sterilized and may include an anti-bacterial surface coating.

As in FIG. **1**, an embodiment of the cover **202** may be removably attached to the first portion **204** of the drinking straw **206** using an adhesive or a fastener. Another embodiment may use a heat sealing technique or a vacuum sealing technique. The cover **202** may contact the first portion **204** of the drinking straw **206**. The cover **202** at least partially seals outer surfaces of the first portion **204** of the drinking straw **206** from ambient air and potential contaminants.

FIG. **3** is a diagram of an embodiment of a drinking straw system **300** having a first cover **302** that encloses a first portion **304** of a drinking straw **306**, and a second cover **307** that encloses a second portion **308** of the drinking straw **306**. The second cover **307** may additionally enclose at least part of the first cover **302**. The second cover **307** may provide a mechanism for protecting the second portion **308** of the drinking straw **306** from contamination during shipping and storage. A waiter may remove the second cover **307** from the first cover **302** and from the drinking straw **306** prior to inserting the drinking straw **306** into a beverage.

According to a particular embodiment, the drinking straw **306** and the first cover **302** may be positioned within the second cover **307**. The same or another embodiment of the second cover **307** may be attached to one or both of the drinking straw **306** and the first cover **302**. For example, the second cover **307** may be removably attached to the second portion **306** of the drinking straw **306** using an adhesive or a fastener. Another embodiment may use a heat sealing technique or a vacuum sealing technique. The second cover **307** may be attached to the first cover **302**.

The first and second covers **302**, **307** may be constructed of plastic, paper, ceramics, rubber, or metal. The first and second covers **302**, **307** may be constructed from different materials. The first and second covers **302**, **307** may be sterilized and may include an anti-bacterial surface coating. The first and second covers **302**, **307** may at least partially seal outer surfaces of the first and second portions **304**, **308** of the drinking straw **306** from ambient air and potential contaminants.

The first cover **302** may be attached to the first portion **304** of the drinking straw **206** using an adhesive or a fastener. Another embodiment may use a heat sealing technique or a vacuum sealing technique. For example, the first cover **302** may be attached and sealed at a first end **310** of the cover **302**. According to another particular embodiment, the first cover **302** is attached in that it has been placed over the first portion **304**, but may not be fastened directly to the first portion **304**. The second cover **307** may contain the first cover **302**. As such, the first cover **302** may be packaged over the first portion **304** or may be merely included in the second cover **307** such that a service provider who opens the second cover **307** may place it over the first portion **304**. The second cover **207** may contact all of or a portion of an outside surface of the drinking straw **206**.

The first cover **302** may be removably attached to the first portion **304** such that a user may pull or tear the first cover **302** from the drinking straw **306**. Either or both of the first and second covers **302**, **307** may additionally be removably attached to a third cover of a second drinking straw (not shown) such that the drinking straws are held together when shipped and stored, and may be separated when used.

FIG. **4** is a flowchart illustrating an embodiment of a method **400** of packaging a drinking straw such that a cover at least partially encloses a first portion of the drinking straw. Turning more particularly to the flowchart, a cover may be formed at **402**. The cover may be configured to at least partially enclose a first portion of a drinking straw. For example, the cover **102** of FIG. **1** may be configured to at least partially cover the first portion **104** of the drinking straw **100**. The cover may be constructed using one or more of paper, metal, anti-bacterial material, and plastic.

At least one of a color, logo, or other design may be printed on the cover at **404**. The printed material may pertain to the contents of the beverage or may include advertising material, for example.

At **406**, the cover may be attached to the first portion of the drinking straw. For instance, the cover **102** of FIG. **1** may be attached to the first portion **104** of the drinking straw **100**. The cover may be attached using at least one of an adhesive, a heat sealing treatment, a fastener, and a vacuum sealing treatment. The cover may be attached to the first portion such that the cover does not enclose a second portion of the drinking straw.

At **408**, an additional cover may be attached to at least one of the first cover and the drinking straw. The additional cover may at least partially enclose a second portion of the drinking straw. For example, the second cover **307** of FIG. **3** may enclose the second portion **308** of the drinking straw **306**. According to a particular embodiment, the additional cover may also enclose at least a portion of the first cover. For instance, the second cover **307** of FIG. **3** may enclose both the second portion **308** of the drinking straw **306** and the first cover **302**. Where desired, at least one of the first and second covers may be attached to a cover of another drinking straw.

While the various embodiments have been described in detail, it is not the intention of the Applicant to restrict, or any way limit the scope of the appended claims to such detail. The embodiments in their broader aspects are therefore not limited to the specific details, representative apparatus, method, and illustrative examples shown and described. Accordingly, departures may be made from such details without departing from the spirit or scope of Applicant's general inventive concept.

I claim:

1. An apparatus, comprising:

a drinking straw;

a first cover configured to be attached to a first portion of the drinking straw, wherein the first cover at least partially encloses the first portion of the drinking straw and does not enclose a remaining portion of the straw, wherein the first cover is configured to at least partially seal an outer surface of the first portion of the drinking straw from ambient air, wherein the first cover is attached to the first portion of the drinking straw using at least one of an adhesive, a heat sealing treatment, a fastener, and a vacuum sealing treatment; and

a second cover configured to enclose a remaining portion of the drinking straw and at least a portion of the first cover, wherein the second cover is configured to at least partially seal an outer surface of the remaining portion of the drinking straw from ambient air.

2. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the first cover comprises at least one of paper, rubber, metal, ceramic, and plastic.

3. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the first cover comprises an anti-bacterial material.

4. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein a logo design is printed on the first cover.

5. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein at least one of a color and a design is printed on the first cover and is indicative of a drink into which the drinking straw is placed.

6. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the first cover is attached to the second cover using at least one of an adhesive, a heat sealing treatment, a fastener, and a vacuum sealing treatment.

7. An apparatus, comprising:

a drinking straw;

a first cover configured to be attached to a first portion of the drinking straw, wherein the first cover at least partially encloses the first portion of the drinking straw and does not enclose a remaining portion of the straw, wherein the first cover is configured to at least partially seal an outer surface of the first portion of the drinking straw from ambient air; and

a second cover configured to enclose a remaining portion of the drinking straw and at least a portion of the first cover, wherein the second cover is configured to at least partially seal an outer surface of the remaining portion of the drinking straw from ambient air, wherein the first cover is attached to the second cover using at least one of an adhesive, a heat sealing treatment, a fastener, and a vacuum sealing treatment.

8. The apparatus of claim 7, wherein the first cover comprises at least one of paper, rubber, metal, ceramic, and plastic.

9. The apparatus of clam 7, wherein the first cover comprises an anti-bacterial material.

10. The apparatus of claim 7, wherein a logo design is printed on the first cover.

11. The apparatus of claim 7, wherein at least one of a color and a design is printed on the first cover and is indicative of a drink into which the drinking straw is placed.

* * * * *